Department of Community Services

Annual Accountability Report

Fiscal Year: April 2003 to March 2004

Department of Community Services
5275 Spring Garden Road
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada

Date: November, 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT 1

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER 2

INTRODUCTION 4

PRIORITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS 5

1.1. CORE BUSINESS AREA: EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE 5
1.2. CORE BUSINESS AREA: FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES 6
1.3. CORE BUSINESS: HOUSING SERVICES 10
1.4. CORE BUSINESS: COMMUNITY SUPPORTS FOR ADULTS 12

FINANCIAL RESULTS 14

PERFORMANCE MEASURES 15

Outcome: Meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities 15
Outcome: Stability of placement for children in care 16
Outcome: Better meet the early childhood development needs of children 19
Outcome: More households in safe, appropriate affordable and sustainable housing 22
Outcome: Increase the level of self-sufficiency of individuals and families 29
Outcome: Enhance family well-being 34

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ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

The Accountability Report of the Department of Community Services for the year-ended March 31, 2004, is prepared pursuant to the Provincial *Financial Act* and government policy and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against Community Services' Business Plan information for the fiscal year 2003-04. The reporting of Community Services outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by the Department's management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Community Services' management. The Report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the department's Business Plan for the 2003-04 fiscal year.

David M. Morse
Minister,
Department of Community Services

Marian F. Tyson, Q.C.
Deputy Minister,
Department of Community Services

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

It is with pleasure that I present the 2003-04 Annual Accountability Report for the Department of Community Services. In 2003-04 the Department set goals and established priorities in its business plan and budget. These goals and priorities reflect the Government's and the Department's commitment to providing a secure and sustainable social service system which is there to support people in times of need.

I am proud of our many accomplishments and the results achieved in 2003-04, and would like to highlight a number of our major achievements.

In April, a new federal/provincial agreement was signed to replace the existing Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities initiative. This new agreement, the *Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities,* will ensure that Nova Scotia can continue to support labour market programs for adults with disabilities. The Agreement supports a broad range of programs and services to respond to the needs of people with disabilities, from skills development to encouraging employer readiness, from supporting a person at work, to ensuring that a person is able to remain working. With this new Agreement in place, funding will continue to be available to help support Nova Scotia labour market programs for adults with disabilities.

A discussion paper - *Renewing the Community Supports for Adults Program* was released in the Spring of 2004. The paper outlined options and approaches for strengthening the continuum of residential services for adults with disabilities. The feedback received will help the Department establish a program that will better meet the needs of adults with disabilities well into the future.

The Department continued to invest in programs and services for children under the federal/provincial Early Childhood Development Initiative. Our vision is for the children of Nova Scotia to be valued and encouraged to develop their unique physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and creative potential. To date $36 million has been invested to enhance home visiting, stabilize and enhance child care services; strengthen parenting and family support; and community engagement and infrastructure.

A number of projects were initiated during 2003-04 under the Affordable Housing Agreement. As part of the Department's strategy to support sustainable communities in the province, a 15-unit apartment complex was completed in the Middleton. Funding was also made available to the Creighton/Gerrish Development Association to construct six semi-detached dwellings on Creighton Street in Halifax, a designated Urban Area of Revitalization. In addition $1 million was allocated to a new Home Preservation Program. The program will help address health and safety concerns by ensuring that homes meet current standards and will extend the lives of these homes by at least 15 years. In March, a province-wide request for proposals under the New Rental

Housing Program was issued, inviting community-based organizations and developers to submit proposals for the development of new affordable rental housing for singles, families, seniors and people with disabilities. It is anticipated that there will be a favourable response to the proposal call, which will enable the development of some 200 units of new, affordable rental housing.

In October 2003, work began on the review and redesign of the domestic adoption program. Improving access to domestic adoption is key to ensuring children-in-care have opportunities to develop and grow in a nurturing family environment.

Nova Scotia's first secure-care facility was opened in November 2003. The Wood Street Centre in Truro helps young people in the care of the Minister of Community Services who need treatment in a secure setting for their safety and well-being. Time spent at the Wood Street Centre is an opportunity for the young person to receive caring, professional support and assistance. The centre's programs and services will focus on short-term crisis diffusion and problem-solving, based upon brief therapy and crisis-intervention approaches, with the goal of establishing a treatment plan that allows youth to return to their community.

The accomplishments and performance of the Department during 2003-04 reflects significant and encouraging progress in fulfilling our commitment to a strong and sustainable system of social supports for Nova Scotians. We will continue to move forward with these and other initiatives to ensure that people in need have access to the supports they need to enable them to participate in, and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the province.

Respectfully submitted,

David M. Morse
Minister,
Department of Community Services

INTRODUCTION

This Annual Accountability Report for the Department of Community Services provides a summary of the activities undertaken to meet the goals and achieve the priorities set out in the Department's business plan for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. The 2003-2004 Business Plan is available on the Department of Community of Services website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/.

In establishing its goals and priorities the Department was guided by the commitment framed in its Mission Statement:

.... ***promoting the independence, self-reliance, security and well being of the people we serve.***

The Department's actions in 2003-2004 were focused on its strategic goals:

- Individuals and families are self-sufficient and able to support themselves;
- Children, youth and persons with disabilities are protected and supported within families and communities that promote their healthy development;
- Nova Scotians are assisted in obtaining safe, affordable, appropriate and sustainable housing;
- Services are provided in an efficient and accountable manner through effective service delivery.

This report is divided in three sections:

1. **Priorities and Accomplishments**
2. **Financial Results**
3. **Performance Measures**

PRIORITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following is a summary of the progress and accomplishments of the Department of Community Services in meeting its 2003-04 Business Plan Priorities. These are organized under the four core business areas of the Department.

1.1. Core Business Area: Employment Support and Income Assistance

The focus of Nova Scotia's Employment Support and Income Assistance Program is to encourage and help individuals and families in their efforts to become self-reliant. A variety of supports are available, including:

- assistance with the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter;
- prescription drug coverage;
- special needs for health related expenses, employability and training support;
- employment assistance for persons with disabilities; and
- child benefits for all low-income families.

Priority

Develop and implement a work plan for the on-going evaluation of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program.

Accomplishment

In 2003-04, the Department completed an evaluation framework for the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. With the framework complete, work planning began. The plan identified that the first part of the overall evaluation work would focus on Employment Support Services.

During the 2003-2004 year, the Income Assistance caseload declined by 1%. However, many of the remaining caseload have multiple barriers to employment that make it difficult for them to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency.

An evaluation of Employment Support Services will assist the Department to identify areas for improvement, ensuring that an appropriate mix of services is available to help clients increase their level of employability, and their ability to support themselves.

1.2. Core Business Area: Family and Children's Services

The focus of Family and Children's is the provision of safe and nurturing environments for children to enable them to develop to their full potential. A broad range of community-based, prevention-oriented supports for both children and families is available, including:

- child protection services;
- programs that support families and foster healthy child development;
- early intervention services to help young children with special needs;
- support for community outreach services including: transition houses, women's centres, and intervention programs for abusive men; and
- support programs for families who care for their children with physical and developmental disabilities at home through in-home support and respite care services.

Priority

Implement a Secure Care Program.

Accomplishment

The official opening of Atlantic Canada's first secure-care facility was held in Truro on November 12, 2003. The Centre began receiving children and youth in-care in December 2003. The opening of the 20-bed facility is the culmination of several years of work to create an innovative and holistic approach to helping children and youth in-crisis.

The Wood Street Centre is the first secure-care facility in Nova Scotia. It is a Centre where children and youth, in the care of the Minister of Community Services, will receive treatment in a secure setting. The children and youth at the Centre are those who are struggling with emotional and behaviourial disorders as a result of experiences with abuse, neglect or other difficult circumstances in their family lives. Time spent at the Wood Street Centre is an opportunity for the young person to receive caring, professional support and assistance. A treatment team works with the family to develop treatment plans for the young person.

The program offered is unique and was developed especially for Nova Scotia's children and youth. Referrals to the Wood Street Centre originate with the local child-welfare authority. The Centre serves children and youth who are determined to be in need of protection under the ***Children and Family Services Act***. It is anticipated that the vast majority of young people who access the Centre will be between the ages of 12 and 16. However, some may be younger or older, depending on individual circumstances. As many as 200 young people may pass through the centre each year.

Priority

Re-design Adoption Services so that children in permanent care are placed more readily with adoptive parents.

Improving access to domestic adoption is key to ensuring children-in-care have opportunities to develop and grow in a nurturing family environment. The current approach to domestic adoption is a lengthy process. This means that many children do not have the opportunity to live in a family environment, to experience a safe, care-free and healthy childhood.

Accomplishment

A project team was established in October 2003 to begin work on the review and redesign of the domestic adoption program. Work was completed on the inter-jurisdictional review of adoption programs across the country, and previous reports were summarized. Work was also completed with respect to identifying the human resource and information technology requirements to support the more efficient and effective delivery of adoption services.

Priority

Continue to implement key Early Childhood Development Initiatives

- Stabilize and enhance child-care.
- Enhance the home visiting Healthy Beginnings Program.
- Provide Parenting Education and Support.
- Implement required infrastructure to create at the local level a system of early childhood development services.

Accomplishments

The Early Childhood Development Initiative is a joint funded federal/provincial program. Under this initiative, provinces are able to design programs and services that meet the specific needs of their communities. In Nova Scotia the approach is to strengthen and expand a broad array of child and family programs and services, including child care subsidies, parent education and support, home-visiting services, volunteer programs, inclusion initiatives for children with special needs, early language development and enhanced training for child care practitioners. To date more than $36 million has been invested to strengthen children's services. The Initiative's vision is for the children of Nova Scotia to be valued and encouraged to develop their unique physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and creative potential.

Highlights of 2003-04 activities include:

Stabilize and enhance child care

In 2003-04, the Department dispersed $3,839,400 in total for the Child Care Stabilization Grant Program.

These grants focus on increasing the training levels of child-care professionals. Since 2002 the percentage of trained child-care providers in Nova Scotia has increased from 78% to 87%.

In addition, 346 Early Childhood Educators, 38 Community Partners and 21 Facilitators throughout the province have completed training with respect to providing appropriate supports for special needs children.

Part Day Child-Care Material and Resources Grants, totaling $724,460 were distributed to promote opportunities for increased physical activity.

Under the Partnership for Inclusion Program, 22 new child-care centres were selected. The purpose of this program is to increase the quality of services in child-care with a focus on increasing inclusion for children with special needs.

Enhance the home visiting Healthy Beginnings Program

This program is delivered through the District Health Authorities. In 2003-04 the District Health Authorities hired additional public health nurse and lay persons to work with the nurses in communities throughout the province.

The enhanced program will ensure all mothers with newborn children, are contacted by a public heath nurse. Children in families who need and would benefit from additional contact, will receive home visiting as required, up to three years of age. Also in March 2004 implementation began on the Healthy Beginnings new information system which will enable program monitoring and evaluation.

Provide Parenting Education and Support

A draft of *Parent Education Guidelines for Best Practices,* was prepared for roll out in 2004-05. Staff is also working on a Child Care Information and Support (CCIS) best practice guide which, when completed in 2004-05, will provide information needed to build quality into program development. Contracts for this project were signed in March 2004.

Implement required infrastructure to create at the local level a system of early childhood development services

The Department is in the process of creating an early childhood development infrastructure system across the province to support the efficient and effective delivery of services for children and families. The system is directed at increasing regional knowledge of existing services in their respective areas, thus enhancing the coordination of existing services. To date, infrastructure teams have been established in two – Central and Eastern – of the Department's four program service delivery regions and support staff have been hired

in each region to work with these teams. In 2004-05 the infrastructure support should be in place in the two remaining regions – Northern and Western.

1.3. Core Business: Housing Services

Housing is a basic need, fundamental to personal well being, and the base upon which to build healthy and sustainable communities. Housing Services provides safe affordable housing to people across the province and uses its existing buildings, and its technical and financial resources to support communities. The variety of housing services offered by the Department includes:

- repair programs for low to moderate income Nova Scotians;
- public housing rental units;
- administration of third party agreements for approximately 9,000 housing units, including 3,100 self-contained cooperative and other non- profit housing units, and 5,900 special purpose beds in facilities like nursing homes and group homes.
- administration of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Nova Scotia loan portfolio of approximately $180 million and $37 million in provincial-funded loans to homeowners, and to non-profit organizations; and
- development of new affordable homeowner and rental housing under the Affordable Housing Program.

Priority

Implement the new Affordable Housing Programs to provide affordable housing for low to moderate income Nova Scotians.

Accomplishment

In December 2003, the Department, together with the Creighton-Garrish Development Corporation, began constructing semi-detached dwellings in Halifax. These units are being funded under the new Home Ownership Program and are located in a designated Urban Area of Revitalization.

Activity began in two other new affordable housing programs. In March 2004 the Department issued a request for proposals under the New Rental Program. Response to the request will enable the Department to increase access to more affordable housing options for low to moderate income people.

Assistance also commenced under the New Home Preservation Program when Community Services' committed $1 million to assist homeowners undertake extensive repairs to their homes.

Priority

Review the results and improve programs based on the Home Repair Program Evaluation completed in 2002-03.

Accomplishment

In 2003-04 the Department implemented program changes to the suite of Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs. Improvements to the programs included increasing the maximum assistance available and the elimination of the repayable loan portion of the program. For example, the maximum assistance available to a homeowner was increased from $12,000 to $16,000.

Priority

Complete an evaluation framework for all the programs under the 1997 Canada Nova Scotia Social Housing Agreement.

Accomplishment

During 2003-04 planning began for the evaluation of the suite of programs under Canada Nova Scotia Social Housing Agreement. The Department reviewed past housing program evaluations and tracked the status of social housing program evaluations in other provincial/territorial jurisdictions. The evaluation framework will be completed in 2004-05.

Priority

Implement the 2003-04 research priorities under the Housing Research Framework, namely, a provincial housing needs assessment, review of the definition of afford-ability and continuation of housing-related research into healthy communities.

Accomplishment

Research commenced in two key areas. In August 2003 the Department engaged a consultant to research the subsidiary rental housing market in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). This market includes rental units in buildings with no more than two rental units (e.g., basement apartments in single detached dwellings, rented duplex dwellings and large dwellings converted into two rental units). This is an area where little information was previously available, and the results indicate that this is an important segment of the rental market.

Preliminary research was also undertaken into housing affordability in Nova Scotia. Research will continue in this area to help inform program development under the Canada Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Program Agreement.

1.4. Core Business: Community Supports for Adults

Access to appropriate residential support services for persons with disabilities is an essential part of participation in the community and key to increasing independence. The Department provides services that include:

- a broad range of residential support services for adults with intellectual disabilities, long term mental illness, and physical disabilities;
- a variety of vocational, day program support and employment services through residential support services or in Adult Service Centres;
- assessment and classification services to identify the abilities and unmet needs of people needing care and/or supervision which help people access appropriate services; and
- licensing, inspection and monitoring services to ensure standards are met in all residential living settings that provide care and supervision for persons with disabilities.

Priority

Develop a model for services for Nova Scotians with disabilities that will include a revised mandate, standards, and recommended legislative changes.

Accomplishment

During 2003-2004 the Department completed an inter-jurisdictional review of residential programs and services for people with disabilities.

A discussion paper, *Renewing the Community Supports for Adults Program*, was released for public discussion in March, 2004. The paper set out a number of concepts and options for improving the continuum of services for adults with disabilities.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

The Department ended the fiscal year in a favourable position of $6.95 million. The results, by Operational Area, are presented in the table below.

Department of Community Services
Estimated & Actual Net Expenditures
For the Year Ending March 31, 2004

Operational Area	Estimate 2003-04 ($)	Actual 2003-04 ($)	Variance (Unfavourable)	Notes
Senior Management	$995,000	$1,013,447	($18,447)	
Corporate Services Unit	$16,351,100	$14,975,390	$1,375,710	1
Policy & Information Management	$2,314,900	$2,064,726	$250,174	
Field Offices	$8,026,000	$7,463,792	$562,208	
Community Supports for Adults	$145,550,000	$146,951,333	($1,401,333)	2
Family & Children's Services	$148,159,000	$143,331,362	$4,827,638	3
Employment Support & Income Assistance	$336,105,000	$339,254,080	($3,149,080)	4
Housing Services	$8,913,000	$4,412,258	$4,500,742	5
All Divisions (DCS)	$666,414,000	$659,466,388	$6,947,612	
Salaries and Benefits	$63,561,700	$58,008,380	$5,553,320	
Funded Staff (FTE's)	1,121	1,034	87	

1. Under-spent by $1.4 Million, Information Technology attained a favourable variance as a result of delays in implementation of the Integrated Case Management System.
2. Community Support for Adults programs were over-spent $1.4 million as a result of increased caseloads.
3. The Division was under-spent $3.6 million in the Maintenance of Children program due to the delay in opening the Secure Care facility in Truro as well as other favourable trends.
4. Increased costs in the Pharmacare Program resulted in the Division being over-spent $3.1 million net.
5. Contributions made by the Province in the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 fiscal years allowed government to recover funds from the Deferred Federal Contribution account in the amount of $4.5 M in 2003-2004 fiscal year.

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PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Community Supports for Adults

Community Supports for Adults is one of the core business areas of the Department. Across the province, this program provides residential and/or vocational supports for approximately 4,500 clients. The desired outcome in this area is to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities who require residential supports.

Outcome: Meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities

Performance Measure: Implementation of a re-designed program.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure provides an indication of the progress made toward improving the continuum of residential support options available to adults with disabilities, and ensuring this core program is sustainable in the long-term.

Where are we now?

In 2002-03 the Department initiated a process for a comprehensive redesign of the Community Supports for Adults program. In 2003-04 the Department surveyed jurisdictions across the country to identify the range of supports available in other provinces, and models of delivery. Providers, advocates and clients were engaged in a process to review and discuss the mandate of the program, a vision, values and the types of services to be included in a continuum which would enable a greater level of independence.

In March 2004 the Department released a discussion paper to obtain public feedback to inform the development of a sustainable continuum of residential support options for adults with disabilities.

Where do we want to be in the future?

In 2004-05, the target is to begin to implement changes as a result of the new model of services.

The Department is steadily moving toward implementation of a new model of services. Strategies for achieving this target include:

- Prepare a summary of the stakeholder feedback on the discussion paper and develop strategies for implementation.
- Seek Government approval to begin to implement components of a renewed program model.
- Develop and implement a process to monitor usage and demand for services.
- Begin to implement the Integrated Case Management technology system to better support the delivery of the Community Supports for Adults Program.
- Implement ongoing dialogue between the Deputy Minister and service providers to improve stakeholder relations.

Core Business: Family & Children's Services

Family and Children's Services is another of the core business areas of the Department. Efforts in this area are directed toward two key outcomes:

- Stability of placement for children in care; and
- Better meeting the early childhood development needs of children

These are discussed in detail in this section.

Outcome: Stability of placement for children in care.

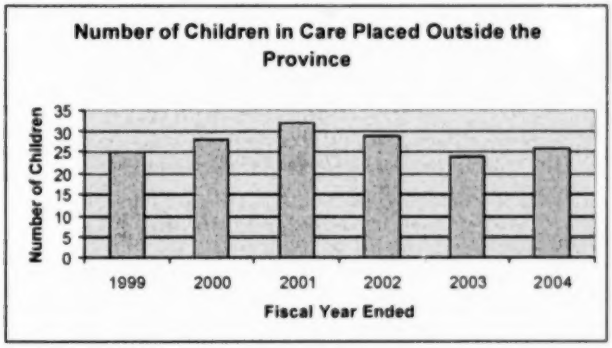
One of the components of this core business, is to provide quality care for children in the care of the Minister pursuant to the ***Children and Family Services Act*** Children come into care when circumstances in their home environment put the child at risk of further abuse or neglect. It is the Department's responsibility to ensure that children's needs are met while they are in care; that there is a case plan for every child in care; and that children reside in safe, stable placements. The primary placements for children in care are foster care, licensed residential child caring facilities and adoptive homes. As of March 31,

2004, there were 2,068 children in care. Of these, 1,066 children were in the permanent care and custody of the Minister.

Stable placements allow agencies to meet the needs of children in care as a "wise and conscientious parent" as stipulated in the ***Act***. With fewer moves there is less emotional stress for children and a decrease in the associated fiscal costs necessary to meet the increasingly complex needs that may arise as a result of frequent moves. One measure of this outcome is the number of children placed in facilities outside the province.

Performance Measure

Number of children placed in facilities outside the province.



What does this measure tell us?

This measure is calculated as of the end of each fiscal year. It tells us how many children in care with emotional and behavioural problems have been placed in specialized treatment facilities outside the province.

Where are we now?

For the year ended 2004, 26 children were placed in specialized treatment facilities outside Nova Scotia. This represents 1.25% of the total number of 2,068 children in care, and a reduction of 11% compared to the base year results of 29 in 2002. Data over the last six years shows slight variation in the numbers, ranging from a high of 32 children in 2001, to a low of 24 children in 2003.

Where do we want to be in the future?

By 2004-05, the Department aims to decrease the 2002 base year number of children requiring specialized treatment outside the province by 15%. Strategies to achieve the target include bringing the Wood Street Centre in Truro up to full operations. Opened in December 2003, this Centre provides secure, specialized treatment for children. Once the

Centre is fully operational, it is expected that the number of children requiring placement outside the province will decrease.

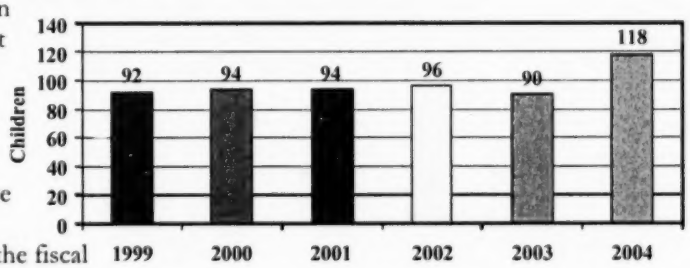
Performance Measure

Number of children in permanent care placed for adoption (agency adoption).

What does this measure tell us?

Though not specifically identified in the 2003-04 Business Plan, this measure provides a further indication of the stability of placement for children in care. Adoption provides a secure, and stable family centred placement for the majority of children who are adopted. The number is calculated as of the end of the fiscal year. It does not include the number of agency adoptions in progress.

Number of Agency Adoption (1999 to 2004)



Source: Department of Community Services Family & Children's Services Division

Where are we now?

For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2004 there were 118 agency adoptions. This is the greatest number of agency adoptions in the past five years and it represents a 23% increase from the base year figure of 96 children in 2002.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to increase the base year results of 96 adoptions by 10%. This target was surpassed for the year ended March 31, 2004 and the task at hand is to maintain this level and work toward improving the numbers in 2005.

The key strategy to continually improve performance in this area is the *Domestic Adoption Program Review and Redesign Initiative.* Identified in the 2003-04 Business Plan as the target, this initiative is looking at ways to increase the number of adoptions for children in care. Commenced in October 2003, the focus of the review and redesign is to reduce the current lengthy adoption process. The lengthy process adds to the cost of maintaining children in care and custody of the Department, but more importantly, it means that many

children in care miss the opportunity to live in a stable, nurturing family environment. Work on redesign of the existing adoption program will continue through to 2004-05.

Outcome: Better meet the early childhood development needs of children.

The future of Nova Scotia is based on its children. Investing in programs and services to enhance the lives of young children so that they may develop to their full potential represents an investment in the social and economic prosperity of Nova Scotia. "The presence and opportunity for appropriate experiences in the early years in the home, the care environment, and the neighbourhood, can promote optimum development in all areas – learning, language, social, emotional, behaviourial, and physical – for our children that will last a lifetime.[1]

Performance Measure

Number and percentage of trained providers in licensed full day early childhood care centres.

What does this measure tell us?

The measure indicates the number and percentage of child care providers who have appropriate training as set out in the ***Nova Scotia Day Care Act*** and ***Regulations***. The base year for this measure is 2002.

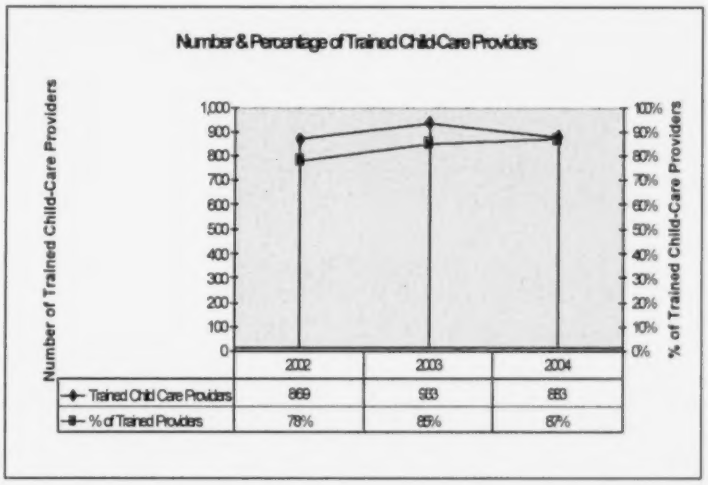
One of Nova Scotia's Early Childhood Development strategies is to improve the quality of care offered by child-care providers located across the province. There is considerable evidence indicating that both educator training and education have a direct relation to the quality of child-care and child development outcomes.

[1] Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Initiative Annual Report April 2003

Where are we now?

Currently 87% of child-care providers have attained the training level set out in the ***Nova Scotia Day Care Act*** and ***Regulations***.

The data for the past three years shows a sharp increase in the percentage trained from 2002, the base year, to 2003 and a modest increase between 2003 to 2004. The percentage of trained providers in 2004 represents a change of 9% points from the base year percentage of 78%.



Where do we want to be in the future?

For 2004-05 the Department has set a target of increasing the base year results of 78% by 10% points to 88%.

Strategies to achieve target:

- Continue to monitor the implementation of training standards and provide support for training opportunities in the early childhood education field.
- Work with the Early Childhood Education Training Institutes to implement curricula that will be inclusive of African Nova Scotians.
- Provide expertise and support to Human Resource Development Canada in the development of programs that would provide opportunities for African Nova Scotians.

Performance Measure

Number of full time licensed child care centres.

What does this measure tell us?

The measure provides information on the number of full time licensed child-care centre in the province. The data is from an updated Departmental listing of licensed full time child care centres.

Where are we now?

Number of full time licensed child care centres & child-care spaces.

Year	2002	2003	Annual % Change	2004	Annual % Change	Cumulative % Change
Centres	204	215	5.39%	220	2.33%	7.84%
Spaces	8,098	8,367	3.32%	9,029	7.91%	11.50%

Full-time licenses child-care centres have increased by approximately 8% since the base year results of 204 centres in 2002. This is very positive, given that from year to year approximately 2 to 3 centres may for one reason of the other close their child-care business.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to increase the number of full-time licensed centres by 10%. To achieve this target the Department has started a *Child Care Subsidy Program Review Initiative* to ensure maximum utilization of the existing subsidies for child care spaces and, to ensure movement of subsidized child care spaces to where they are most needed.

Performance Measure

Number of spaces in full time licensed child care centres.

What does this measure tell us?

This provides an indication on the number of spaces available in the province's licensed child-care system. The data comes for a Departmental listing of licensed full time child-care centres.

Where are we now?

The data for 2004 indicates that an additional 931 spaces were available in 2004 compared to 2002, an increase of 8% over the 2003 results.

Where do we want to be in the future?

In 2003-04, the Department exceeded its targeted 10% increase for 2004-05, having achieved an increase of 11.15% over the base year figure of 8,098 spaces.

As part of the *Child Care Subsidy Program Review Initiative*, the Department will be looking at ways to maintain and/or improve the existing capacity in the system.

Core Business: Housing Services

Another of the Department's core business areas is Housing services. The key result desired in this area is to ensure that more households in Nova Scotia have access to safe, appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing.

Outcome: More households in safe, appropriate affordable and sustainable housing.

Safe, appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing is a significant contributor to the health of our communities and to the personal well-being of all Nova Scotians.

Good housing provides the environment and base needed to effectively deliver social programs such as home care, early childhood development, education and employment training programs. In particular it has a lasting effect on children as research has shown that poor housing conditions have a detrimental impact on early childhood development. Community Services' housing programs are geared to keeping homes safe and comfortable. They also provide employment to trades people across the Province.

Performance Measure

Number of homes upgraded through home repair/home adaptation programs.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure is calculated at the end of the fiscal year. It includes the total number of units and beds improved or acquired in the following programs: Small Loans Assistance, Family Modest Housing, Seniors Assistance, Emergency Assistance, Access-A-Home, the entire suite of Residential Rehabilitation Assistance (RRAP) Programs, and the Home Preservation Program.

Included in the RRAP Suite of Programs is the Shelter Enhancement Program for emergency shelters. This program provides funds to non-profit and charitable organizations whose principal objectives are to provide housing shelters for victims of violence. Assistance for this program is discussed in terms of total number of beds provided.

Home repair/adaptation programs are a major component of the province's housing strategy. The province has one of the oldest housing stocks in the country. In 2001, approximately 25% of all dwellings were building prior to World War II. The comparable national figure is 10%. Older homes require more on-going maintenance and capital improvements to ensure that they continue to provide safe housing for their occupants.

Based on 2001 data, the homes of almost one in five homeowners are in need of major repair. The Department's home repair programs help these Nova Scotians to maintain their homes in a good state of repair and reduce the incidence of poor housing which can have a detrimental impact of the lives of its occupants.

Where are we now?

Historically all available home repair/home adaptation program funds are totally committed each year.

Under the Canada Nova Scotia Renovation Programs Agreement signed in November 2003 changes were made to the RRAP programs. The changes were the outcome of a national program review conducted by CMHC in 2002. They included among other things an increase in the maximum assistance levels from $12,000 to $16,000 and the elimination of the forgivable loan portion of the program. The increase in assistance helped to reduce the impact of inflation on the cost of building materials and labour. Since the

annual program budgets have not been increased, while the per unit increase in financial assistance has enabled homeowners to undertake more extensive repairs, it has also meant that fewer households can be helped. This is reflected in the 2003-04 decrease in the number of households assisted.

Number of homes upgraded through home repair/home adaptation programs.

Year	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Units	2,828	2,943*	2,887	2,526
Beds				100

*** There was an error in the 2001-02 results previously published as 2,660.**

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to maintain the number of households assisted at the base year level of 2,828.

One of the key strategies to achieving this target will be the full implementation of the new Home Preservation Program funded under the Canada Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement. In 2003-04, 26 households were assisted under this program. Funding increases are planned for the new program in 2004-05, which will enable the Department to assist more households make the necessary repairs to their homes.

Performance Measure

Percentage of public housing budget allocated to maintenance improvement of the province's public housing.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure indicates the level of spending on the maintenance and improvement of the province's public housing stock of approximately 13,500 units.[2] Specifically it tells us the percentage of the overall public housing 2003-04 budget that was actually spent on maintaining and improving the building stock. This is important because the buildings are not new and there are significant maintenance issues that require a steady financial commitment in order to ensure public housing tenants live in safe and healthy housing.

Across the province there are a variety of provincially owned housing projects. In Halifax and Sydney the housing includes high rise apartment buildings. The family units are generally single detached dwelling, semi-detached dwellings or townhouse units. Also, approximately 800 single detached dwellings are served by septic sewer system and dug wells. Many of the housing projects for seniors are one and two-storey complexes. Each of the different building types has a unique set of on-going maintenance issues and 'aging' issues.

Where are we now?

Percentage of public housing budget allocated to maintenance improvement of the province's public housing.

2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
20.30%	19.40%	18.90%	22.70%

The above table indicates that the percentages have fluctuated. The average rate of expenditures over the past three years is equivalent to 20.3%. Expenditures were higher in 2003-04, reflecting the completion of $2.1 M in deferred maintenance from prior years. Maintaining expenditures at approximately 20% is an on-going challenge for the Department. Pressures have arisen on two fronts.

[2] This maintenance work does not encompass modernization initiatives such as installing elevators, making adaptations for frail seniors and property enhancements, to ensure seniors are able to live independently longer and to ensure public housing continues to be an assent for many years to come. These are funded separately.

Firstly, annual federal subsidies have been capped at the 1995-96 levels. Secondly, inflationary increases in operating costs such as home fuel oil, electricity, wages, and building materials exceed increases in revenues from rents.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to maintain the level of spending on maintenance and improvement at 20% of the annual public housing budget.

To maintain the 20% target, the Department is continually pursuing ways to economize on operating and administrative expenses and act upon revenue generating opportunities.

Performance Measure

Percentage of cooperative and non-profit housing organizations that have adequately funded reserves.[2]

What does this measure tell us?

This measure indicates how many co-operatives and non-profit housing organizations are in a balanced financial position and have sufficient revenue to meet all expenditures.

Co-operatives and non-profit housing organizations provide approximately 3,100 self-contained dwelling-units. It is necessary to monitor the financial stability of these organizations to ensure that they are able to continue to provide, safe affordable and sustainable housing.

[2] For clarity the measure was revised slightly during the 2004-05 business planning process. The measure stated in the Department's 2003-04 Business Plan was "the percentage of co-operative and non-profit housing organizations financially stable."

Where are we now?

Since 2000-01 there has been very noticeable progress made toward the target. The number of housing organizations in a balanced position has risen from 62.5% in the base year 2000-01 to 71% in 2002-03. This level has been maintained through 2003-04.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set by the Department for 2004-05 is to achieve a measure of 75%.

A number of strategies have been and will continue to be employed to improve the financial position of the co-operatives and non-profit housing organizations. These include:

Percentage of cooperative and non-profit housing organizations that have adequately funded reserves

Year	Percentage
2000-01*	63%
2001-02	68%
2002-03	71%
2003-04	71%

*Base Year

- working with others to provide training;
- developing a co-operative network to build capacity;
- increasing opportunities for information exchange; and
- working with individual organizations to assist and train.

In addition, staff developed a model to better monitor the financial activities of housing co-operatives and non-profits, which was implemented in 2003-04.

Performance Measure

Percentage of the Affordable Housing Agreement funds committed to date on creating or renovating housing units.[3]

[3] For clarity the measure was revised slightly during the 2004-05 business planning process. The measure as stated in the 2003-04 Business Plan was "percentage of the Affordable Housing Agreement funds committed to date on creating new homes."

What does this measure tell us?

The measure indicates how much of the $37.26 M available under the 5-year Canada Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement signed in 2002 has been committed. Under the terms of the Agreement the available funds must be committed by March 31, 2006. The Agreement is an important piece of the province's overall housing strategy.

Where are we now?

In the base year 2002-03, the Department committed $750,000 for a 15-unit project in Middleton, which is now fully operational.

In 2003-04, an additional $1.24 million was committed. This included six semi-detached dwelling units under the New Homeownership Program and $1 M to assist 26 households under the Home Preservation Program.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to commit 60% of all funds available under the Agreement, with full commitment by March 31, 2006.

Strategies to achieve this target include developing partnerships with community-based organizations, municipalities and the private sector to create or renovate housing units; developing existing land holdings or purchasing land for residential development; and purchasing multi-unit residential properties for rehabilitation and rental.

In March 2004 the Department issued a Request for Proposals (FRP) for affordable rental housing units. It is anticipated that during 2004-05 the Department will begin to enter into agreements for the funding and construction of new affordable rental housing units. This activity will sharply increase the percentage of committed funds.

Core Business: Employment Support & Income Assistance

Employment Support and Income Assistance is another core business area of the Department. The focus of the program is to help people achieve self-sufficiency. Efforts in this program are directed toward achieving two key outcomes:

- Increase the level of self-sufficiency of individuals and families.
- Enhance family well-being

These are discussed in detail in this section.

Outcome: Increase the level of self-sufficiency of individuals and families.

Performance Measure

Percentage of income assistant recipients involved in Employment Support Services who have secured full or part-time employment.

What does this measure tell us?

Some individuals receiving income support may secure full or part-time employment and still be in receipt of income assistance at a reduced amount. That is, the wages earned are not sufficient to completely exit the program. It does however reduce reliance on income assistance and move people closer to exiting the program. This measure indicates how many income recipients are in this situation.

Where are we now?

The performance over the past three years has improved relative to 2000-01. However since 2001-02 the percentage of recipients who have secured full or part-time employment has been declining.

Percentage of income assistant recipients involved in Employment Support Services who have secured full or part-time employment.

Year	Percentage
2000-01	23%
2001-02*	34%
2002-03	31%
2003-04	25%

* Base Year

Since 1999, the income assistance caseload has declined by 22%, and with the help of Employment Support Services, approximately 3,200 were successful in securing employment.

Making further inroads in reducing reliance on income assistance is becoming more challenging. Those individuals remaining on the caseload tend to have multiple barriers to employment. These barriers may include changing family circumstances, disability or educational/training gaps. Almost 60% of clients have some level of disability. Many have not completed high school and as the past decade has shown, those without a high school education experience a higher rate of unemployment. Clients in this situation require time and support to make a successful transition into the labour force.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to increase the base year percentage of 34% by 5% points.

Strategies to achieve the target include:

- Evaluate the Employment Support Services component of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program to ensure current programs and delivery are meeting the needs of clients.
- Undertake an assessment of all cases to determine employment-readiness/barriers.
- Undertake a review of the Child Care Subsidy Program; identify options for redesign, to ensure current subsidized child care dollars are utilized in the best possible way to support parents in need who have the opportunity to participate in training, take a job or get involved in other activities in their community
- Provide prescription drug coverage (Pharmacare) to recipients leaving income assistance for work for up to one year to enable people to maintain employment.
- Provide funding for the Department of Education's literacy programs.

Performance Measure

Income assistance as a percentage of total monthly income.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure represents the ratio of income assistance payments to total monthly household income for all income assistance recipients. It provides an indication of income received by recipients from other sources such as wages, pensions, family support payments or Employment Insurance. As such it provides an indication of the extent of dependency on income assistance.

Where are we now?

Since the 2000-01 base year the percentage has dropped 2% from 70% to 68%.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to decrease the base year percentage of 70% by 5% points.

The downward trend in the measure's performance over the past two years is encouraging but work still needs to be done to achieve the target. Key strategies being pursed include:

Income assistance as a percentage of total monthly income

Year	Percentage
2000-01*	70%
2001-02	73%
2002-03	69%
2003-04	68%

* Base Year

- the evaluation of the Employment Support Services;
- the assessment of all cases to determine employment-readiness and/or barriers to employment; and
- the provision of pharmcare drug coverage which provides assistance for up to one year to income assistance recipients when they exit the program.

Preliminary results of the employment-readiness assessment illustrate the challenges facing the Department and the clients themselves. For example, between 2002-03, the Department provided services to 10,886 income recipients who were deemed able to participate in employability activities. Approximately 25% of these individuals obtained employment through departmental services.

An assessment of the remaining 75% indicates this group of recipients has multi-barriers (6 to 12 identified barriers) to immediate employment. The most common barriers are the lack of high school completion and marketable training. Other barriers include, for example, physical health issues that impact employment; transportation challenges and lack of interview skills.

Performance Measure

Percentage of total income assistance cases with wage income.

What does this measure tell us?

The measure provides an indication of the employment activity of clients remaining on the caseload. In some cases, clients are not ready or able to enter the labour market full-time, or secure full-time employment. Many have education and training barriers and/or health and disability issues that either limit their job opportunities, or prevent them from holding full-time employment. Nonetheless, entry into the labour market, albeit on a limited scale, is the first step for many toward achieving independence. The percentage is calculated in January of each fiscal year.

Where are we now?

Performance to date indicates progress on this measure has been slow. As discussed previously, the clients currently on the Employment Support and Income Assistance caseload tend to have multiple employability barriers that require greater effort and time to help them make the transition into the labour force. Many lack a high school education and recent statistics indicate that individuals without a high school diploma are more likely to be unemployed than those with a diploma.

Percentage of total income assistance cases with wage income	
Year	Percentage
2001-02*	10%
2002-03	11%
2003-04	10%

* Base Year

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to increase the 2001-02 base year percentage of 10% by 5% points.

Key strategies to better position the Department to make meaningful progress toward the target include:

- Evaluate the Employment Support Services component of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program to ensure current programs and delivery are meeting the needs of clients.
- Undertake an assessment of all cases to determine employment-readiness/barriers.
- Continue to provide financial assistance for literacy training.

Performance Measure

Percentage of income assistance recipients, assessed as being appropriate to participate in approved educational programs or employability activity, and who are actively participating in approved educational programs.[4]

What does this measure tell us?

The measure indicates the percentage of individuals participating in approved educational programs of those income assistance recipients who are eligible to participate.

One of the challenges faced by clients is the need to enhance their skills and improve their personal potential. These activities better prepare people for work and to participate as full citizens in their communities. The new Employment Support and Income Assistance Program introduced in 2000-01 provides for basic needs, and enables individuals and families to take advantage of training and job opportunities. Participation in training and employment activities gives people a chance to become more self-sufficient.

Under the program, clients may enroll in a variety of skill development experiences, including literacy and upgrading programs, as well as specialized courses assisting people to acquire job-specific skills.

[4] This measure was reworded. It was previously stated as "percentage of income assistance recipients participating in approved educational programs."

Where are we now?

Throughout the three year period 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04, the Department has been successful in maintaining a consistent participation rate of 43%. This is very positive and reflects the emphasis the Department's income assistance program places on education and skill training

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to maintain the 2001-02 base year percentage of 43%.

The evaluation of the Employment Support component of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program and the initiative to assess all cases to determine employment-readiness/barriers are important strategies for maintaining the percentage at 43%.

Outcome: Enhance family well-being.

Performance Measure

Percentage of children in Nova Scotia under 18 years of age living in low income households as determined by Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off (LICO's) after taxes data.

Persons in Low-Income After Tax (92 LICOs Base)		
Year	Number of Children <18	% of Children <18
1992	26,000	11.9
1993	38,000	17.5
1994	35,000	15.9
1995	39,000	18.1
1996	37,000	17.1
1997	38,000	18.1
1998	32,000	15.3
1999	23,000	11.3
2000	23,000	11.4
2001	26,000	13.2

What does this measure tell us?

Annually, Statistics Canada provides information on the income level at which a family may experience hardship because it has to expend a greater portion of its income on the basic necessities than does an average family of similar size. These are the called "Low Income Cut Off 's (LICO's). There is a two-year lag in Statistics Canada's reporting.

This measure provides data on the number of children in Nova Scotia under the age of 18 who are living in households below the LICO level.

Where are we now?

In 1992 the number of children living in low-income families was 26,000 or 11.9% of all children under the age of 18.

In 2001, the number of children living in low-income families was 26,000; unchanged from 1992. The percentage of children however has increased to 13.2%, as the population o f children declines.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2004-05 is to reduce the percentage to 11%.

The number of people living in low-income situations is beyond the direct control of Community Services. While the Department can help with respect to specific client groups, low-income is affected by the overall level of economic activity, education levels, minimum wage rates, average wage rates, labour market participation rates in general, in addition to federal/provincial income transfers. To address this requires a concerted government-wide strategy that involves collaboration and cooperation with other provincial departments and other levels of government.

The Department is continually pursuing ways to assist people on income assistance find and maintain employment that provides an opportunity to increase overall household income. Strategies to achieve the target include a review of the income assistance rate structure, an evaluation of employment support services, and the child-care subsidy review project.